Export of Crop Products

617. SHRI VIRENDRA KUMAR SINGH : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is any scheme under consideration of the Government for direct participation of farmers in the export of crop products; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) and (b) Export of agricultural and allied products can be undertaken by an exporter including farmers/farmer organisation subject to the provisions of the Export Import Policy. All Commodity Boards/Export Promotion Councils periodically interact with the farmers/farmer organisation to encourage them to undertake exports.

[English]

Import Duty on Capital Goods

618. SHRI MADAN PATIL :
SHRI ANANT GUDHE :
SHRI PRITHVIRAJ D. CHAVAN :
SHRI MANGAT RAM SHARMA :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the country is facing a sharp industrial slowdown;

(b) if so, the steps taken to kick-start the economy;

(c) whether the government have set up any Expert Committee to look into the problems of Capital Goods Sector arising out of import duty structure;

(d) if so, the recommendations made and steps taken to shore up demand in the economy; and

(e) the steps taken to boost investment in areas like power, oil, coal, telecom, highways and roads?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) The industrial growth as measured by the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) decelerated to 6.8 per cent in 1996–97 from 12.1 per cent in 1995–96. However, the industrial growth of 5.4 per cent in the first quarter (April–June) of the current year is higher than the 2.1 per cent growth witnessed in the last quarter of the previous year. Growth rate during July–August 1997, the latest period for which such data are available, is provisionally estimated at 4.5 per cent.

(b) Several measures have been taken by Government for faster industrial growth. Policies announced in the Union Budget, 1997–98 and credit policies announced by RBI in April 1997 and October 1997 contain several incentives for encouraging investment and industrial growth. The measures include reduction in personal and corporate taxes, rationalisation of excise duty and reservation of 14 items from the list of items reserved for small scale industry. The Government have carried the delicencing exercise further it deregulate 5 more industries, appointed a High Powered Export Promotion Board for facilitating export, constituted the Tariff commission for looking into tariff related issues and granted operational autonomy to 9 "Navaratna" and other PSUs.

(c) and (d) As a follow up to the Prime Minister's meeting with industrialists on 14.10.1997, a group under Dr. Arjun Sengupta, Member, Planning Commission has bee requested to examine to what extent the domestic capital goods has been placed at a disadvantage by import of capital goods at zero duty and suggest measures thereon.

(e) In order to encourage investment in the "core" sector of the economy, foreign investment norms have been further liberalised. Regulatory authorities like TRAI and Tariff Authority for Major Ports have been set up. Guidelines have been issued for facilitating private investment in highway development and ports. Measures have been taken for bridging oil pool deficit and removing obstacles for greater private investment. The Union Budget 1997–98 has further broadened the investment opportunities by offering more fiscal incentives.

Cheque Books to Plantation Companies

619. SHRI RAMCHANDRA VEERAPPA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state;

(a) whether the several banks are still issuing cheque books to plantation companies;

(b) if so, the action taken by the Government to stop such practice; and

(c) the names of those banks with number of cheques issued to plantation companies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) to (c) according to Reserve Bank of India (RBI) they have cautioned banks *vide* their circular dated 25th Sept. 1997 to take due care to ensure that any unusually large demand by any account holder for cheque books is looked into carefully to make sure that the cheque leaves are needed for genuine short term business requirements. RBI has further reported that while they have not asked banks to stop issuing cheque books to plantation companies, they have advised banks to ensure that these are meant for genuine short term business requirements only.

Adhoc Appointment

620. SHRI PRADIP BHATTACHARYA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether any recommendations have been made for the cadre of Ad hoc appointees on consolidated salary in direct higher responsible positions in various Ministries/ Departments;

(b) if so, whether any such recommendations have been duly examined and are also to be implemented soon; and

(c) if not whether Government propose to frame any guidelines in regard to such cadre so that their salaries may not be equal or near equal to class C & D groups?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) to (c) Appointments on consolidated salary are made on need base and the consolidated salary is decided based on job requirements and also keeping in view the status of the candidate/officer expected to discharge the duties. Such appointments are not termed as ad hoc appointments. Further the Pay Commission or any other body has not made any recommendation in this regard. The ad hoc appointments are made only in rare and exceptational circumstances against the posts which cannot be kept vacant until regular candidates become available. Such appointments can be made by the respective Ministry/Department upto one year and beyond that the approval of the Department of Personnel & Training is mandatory.

Bank Branches Opened in Rural Areas

621. SHRI DINESH CHANDRA YADAV :
SHRI SHIVANAND H. KOUJALGI :

Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) The number of bank branches opened so far in the rural areas of the country since the nationalisation of the banks;

(b) whether any appraisal of the working of the rural banks have been made to know how far these banks have been able to secure deposits and have kept pace with the changing economic scenario in giving credits to the agriculturists; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ) : (a) Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have reported that 33025 rural branches of Scheduled Commercial banks have been opened after June 30, 1969.

(b) and (c) Reserve Bank of India have advised commercial banks that they should achieve a credit deposit ratio of 60 per cent in respect of their rural and semi-urban branches separately on an all India basis. Banks have also been advised that while it is not necessary that this ratio should be achieved separately branch-wise, district-wise or region-wise, the banks should nevertheless ensure that wide disparity in the ratios between different States/Region is avoided in order to minimise imbalances in credit deployment. However, the credit absorption capacity of the State/Region which in turn is determined and influenced by factors such as development of infrastructural facilities like irrigation, power, rail, road transport, basic and technical education, entrepreneurship and availability of required inputs and marketing outlets for agricultural and industrial production.

Dumping of Foreign Products

622. SHRI SYDAIAH KOTA : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have received any complaint regarding dumping of products by foreign manufacturers into the country;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the action taken by the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (DR. BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH) : (a) to (c) Details of cases where anti-dumping investigations have been concluded or are under progress are given in the Statements I, II and III